

13th Annual

# Thinking & Learning Conference

**DR JANELLE WILLS**

Friday 20 May

**Collaborative Teams that Transform Teacher  
Development: The next steps in PLCs**

Session 3

**MELBOURNE**

# DR JANELLE WILLS

Dr Janelle Wills, PhD, is the director of Marzano Institute Australia. She is the lead training associate for High Reliability Schools, The Art and Science of Teaching and other Marzano Research topics. She works extensively with schools, regions and systems throughout Australia.



With over 30 years of teaching and leadership experience, Dr Wills maintains a strong commitment to continued learning that enables her to remain both informed and innovative in her approach. Throughout her career, she has been adept at linking theory with practice, resulting in the development of significant initiatives both within schools and at a sector level. Dr Wills firmly believes in the importance of teaching as a profession and fervently promotes the need for teachers to actively engage with research through action research and reflective practice.

Dr Wills's PhD thesis focused on self-efficacy and contributed to multiple fields of knowledge, including special education, gifted education, assessment and feedback.

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## COLLABORATIVE TEAMS THAT TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

Here are some of the amazing practices we saw in your science classroom, which we want to incorporate into our own teaching: you purposely took breaks in instruction to provide opportunities for student questions. Your answers to student questions were clear, focused and easy to understand. Using models such as "The fat cat ate the rat" to teach gene mutations was a great idea. We were as fascinated as the students when you illustrated gene mutations by changing letters in the sentence.

*Instructional rounds at Wooden Primary School serve as powerful collaborative vehicles for sharing effective instructional practices across the entire teaching staff. At this school, year-level collaborative teams participate in instructional rounds as a team and observe teachers at other year levels. As the teams engage in instructional rounds, they record their observations and thoughts on a specific form that is based on the school's model of instruction. This form becomes the basis for the debriefing conversation. The final step in the process occurs when the year-level teams meet to debrief what they have observed in other classrooms and how they might incorporate new practices into their own work.*

## Enhancing Reflective Practice

Another method for transforming teacher development is to use the PLC process to foster reflective practice. *Reflective practice* involves deliberate engagement in and reflection on one's own work and abilities. When applying reflective practice to teaching, we suggest a four-step process that is detailed in the book *Becoming a Reflective Teacher* (Marzano, 2012): (1) have a model of effective teaching, (2) set growth goals, (3) engage in focused practice, and (4) receive focused feedback. Teams of teachers can use this process either to work on common goals as a team or to support each other in working on individual goals.

In either case, the first step in the process is to have a model of effective teaching, also known as a language of instruction. By definition, a model of effective teaching delineates those areas a teacher might focus on for reflective practice. While some schools might use their teacher evaluation model or their instructional framework for this purpose, this might not be the best option. Robert J. Marzano and Michael D. Toth (2013) explained that many evaluation models are designed to measure teachers' overall effectiveness as opposed to developing their classroom practice. These are two different purposes and require different approaches. Measurement can be done by examining a teacher's use of a relatively small set of instructional strategies and their direct effect on student learning. Development, on the other hand, requires an examination of a wide array of instructional strategies that allows a teacher to gradually improve their instructional prowess.

In chapter 5 (page 67), we provided a rudimentary discussion of our recommended language of instruction. Here, we address that model in more depth. Our recommended model for teacher development, which is based on an updated version of *The Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007), is depicted in figure 6.1 and further exemplified in appendix D (page 143).

Transforming Teacher Development

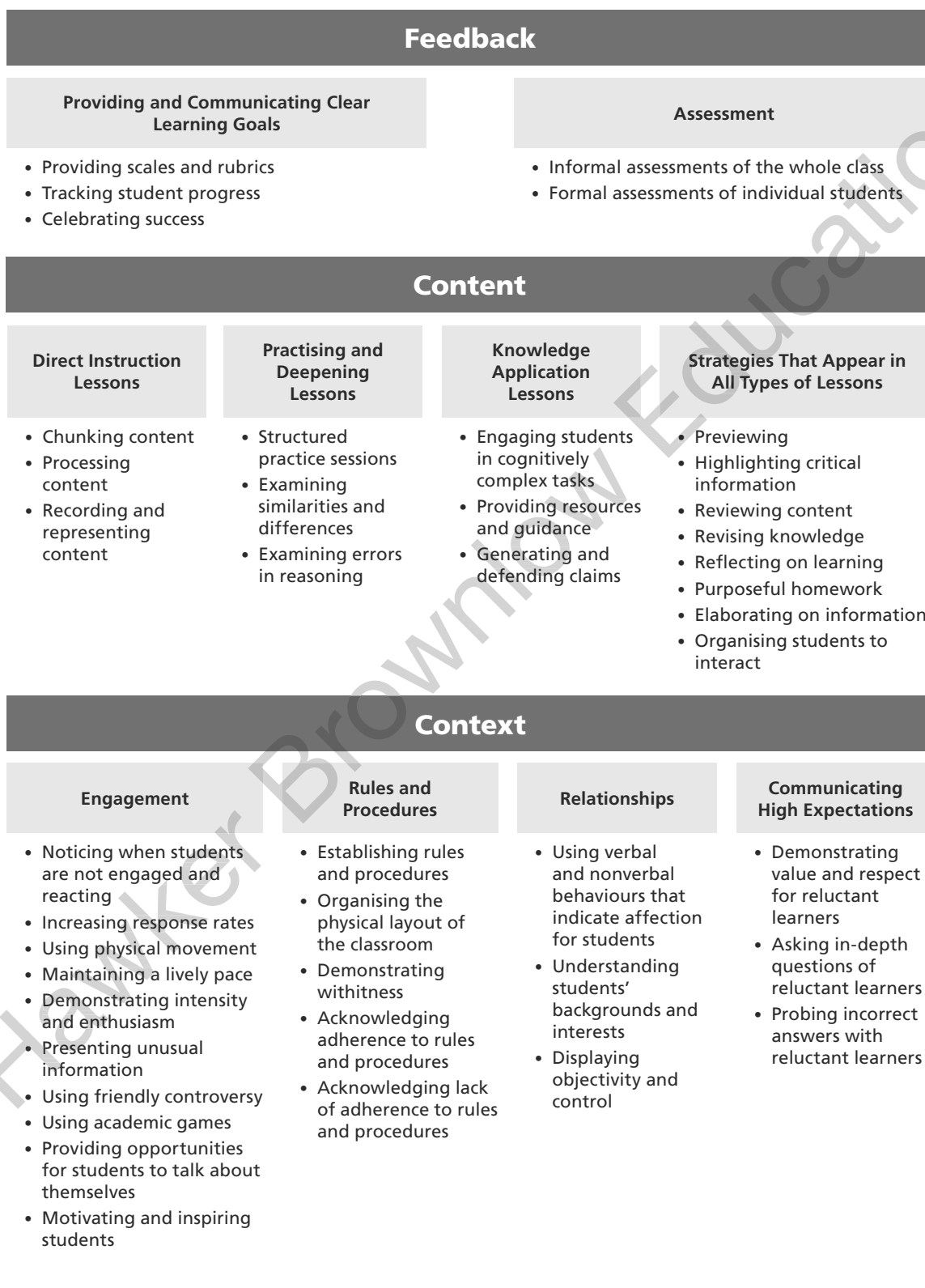


Figure 6.1: A model of effective instruction.

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS THAT TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

Figure 6.1 contains three major sections: (1) feedback, (2) content, and (3) context. The categories in the feedback section deal with clear goals and assessment relative to those goals. The categories in the content section address the three different types of lessons discussed in chapter 5 (page 67): (1) direct instruction lessons, (2) practising and deepening lessons, and (3) knowledge application lessons. This section also contains strategies that can appear in all three types of lessons. The categories in the context section address engagement, rules and procedures, relationships and high expectations. Together these elements provide students with an orderly and affirming environment for learning.

The 43 elements in this model each contain specific strategies, details about which can be found in the Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies (available at [marzanoresearch.com/compendium](http://marzanoresearch.com/compendium)). Together the elements in the model encompass over three hundred specific instructional strategies. To illustrate, consider the element titled Increasing Response Rates under the category of Engagement, which is in the context section. There are many instructional strategies a teacher can use to increase response rates, such as wait time, random names, response chaining, voting techniques, and the like. In effect, the model is designed as a resource any teacher can use to select areas on which to engage in reflective practice. Even the most seasoned veteran should be able to find areas of challenge and exploration.

The second step in reflective practice is to set growth goals in relation to the model of effective teaching; this step will vary slightly depending on whether teachers have individual or team goals. In both cases, teachers should begin by performing self-audits of their abilities on each element of the model. Teachers can rate themselves on the elements in appendix D (page 143) on a 0–4 scale, as shown in table 6.2. When teachers rate themselves on an element, they should be thinking in terms of a specific strategy or strategies for that element.

**Table 6.2: Reflective Practice Scale**

4 Innovating	3 Applying	2 Developing	1 Beginning	0 Not Using
The teacher adapts or creates new versions of the strategy or behaviour for unique student needs and situations.	The teacher uses the strategy or behaviour and monitors the extent to which it affects student outcomes.	The teacher uses the strategy or behaviour but does so in a somewhat mechanistic way.	The teacher uses the strategy or behaviour incorrectly or with parts missing.	The teacher should use the strategy or behaviour but does not.

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2012, p. 37.

After rating themselves on each element of the model, teachers who are setting goals individually can select one or more elements on which they have rated themselves 0 or 1 (that is, Not Using or Beginning) and are interested in improving. In teams that are choosing common goals, each teacher should write the elements on which they rated a 0 or 1 on individual slips of paper or sticky notes. Then, the team should categorise the sticky notes, grouping them by element or into related elements. If there are a few elements on which the entire team needs to improve, those would be obvious choices for team goals. Alternatively, the team can vote. Each teacher would receive four stickers or other markers to indicate the elements on which they think the team should work. The teachers can place these stickers however they like – even all four stickers on one element, if it is particularly important. The element or group of related elements that receives the most votes will be the team’s priority goal for the year.

## Transforming Teacher Development

The third step in reflective practice is engaging in focused practice. While engaged in focused practice, teachers keep trying a selected strategy, continually shaping their use of it. This will be a largely individual endeavour whether the team is using individual or common goals. However, a team with common goals might choose a particular element or a specific strategy within an element for everyone to try during the same time period.

The fourth step of reflective practice is receiving focused feedback. This is fairly simple in a team with common goals. Members can observe each other (in person or on video), discuss strategies as a team and analyse student data as a team. One method for ensuring focused feedback is for each teacher to have a *goal mentor* within the team. For example, if a teacher's goal is to improve his ability to notice and address when students are not engaged, he would pair up with another teacher in the team who (ideally) has a rating of 4 (innovating, the highest score) on the reflective practice scale. This goal mentor would help provide focused feedback to the teacher. Because all teachers have different strengths and weaknesses, each teacher will ideally be able to find a mentor within their team and also act as a mentor to others. However, it is possible that a team might have no experts in a particular area and would then ask for help from another collaborative team.

### Coaching Through Videos

In the book *Becoming a Reflective Teacher*, Marzano (2012) stated:

To facilitate the growth process, a teacher needs feedback on his or her use of specific instructional strategies and teacher behaviors related to his or her growth goals. This feedback can come from a variety of sources. One powerful source is video data. (p. 15)

Collaborative teams should set a standing agenda item to give peer feedback for each member's professional growth goals using video recordings. Teams should consider a schedule in which each teacher knows when they will be receiving focused feedback from the team regarding their selected instructional goals. The teacher then films one or two short segments of themselves teaching while using the specific instructional strategy identified in their goals. The teacher reviews their own video segments individually and notes specific details about the use of the strategy. During the collaborative team meeting, team members view the same video and provide focused feedback to the teacher on the relevant strategy. Ideally, each teacher would receive feedback from at least one peer coaching session during the course of each term.

Coaching is even more powerful when a collaborative team identifies one or more common strategies. To illustrate, assume the collaborative team has established a common growth goal around the element of previewing new content, and members also decide to use a common strategy for previewing. Specifically, they plan to all use a K-W-L graphic organiser. As an agenda item for their collaborative team meetings, they engage in reflective discussions about their experiences using the strategy in class. Through these discussions, they share ideas and make adjustments to their own personal practice based on feedback from the team. At one point during the term, each team member video records themselves using the K-W-L strategy. During a collaborative team meeting, team members watch the videos and offer focused feedback to each other in the use of the common strategy.

The following vignettes depict how schools might engage in reflective practice.



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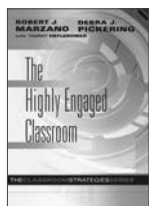
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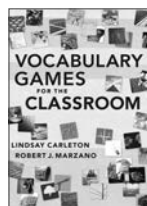
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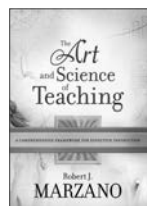
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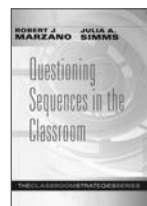
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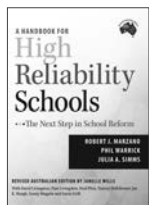
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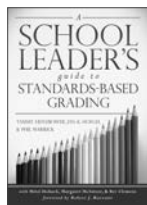
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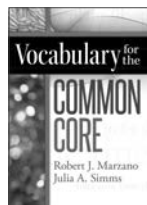
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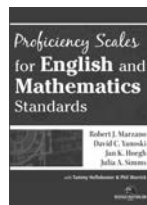
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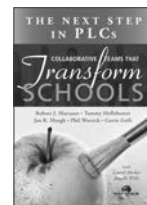
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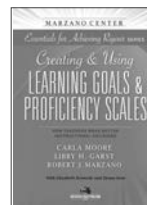
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